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Now: Reflection on the Importance of Furman as It Is Now

Samuel Cubiero '16

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WE HAVE COME TO A POINT WHERE WE ARE AFFLICTED WITH A NEW DISEASE: OUR NEED TO FEEL IN COMPLETE CONTROL OF OUR HEALTH—AND, MORE BROADLY SPEAKING—OUR LIVES.

surely information about your genetic makeup is helpful in planning for the future. Except it may not be. Critics such as Chosed argue that some of this information, taken out of context and without proper counseling, could be dangerous.

"Your report could say, for example, that you could possibly develop leukemia later in life. It won't say, however, that this will only happen if the gene mutates, and that will only happen if specific circumstances occur. It's important that these results are complemented with proper counseling and advising in order for the patient to fully understand the implications."

In December of 2013, 23andMe faced a class action \$5 million lawsuit less than a week after the Federal Drug Administration ordered the company to stop sales. The FDA accused the company of false advertising, stating that 23andMe claimed to provide "health reports" to customers,

yet they had not provided the FDA with any proof of clinical validation. Further, the company was taking the information received from customers to create a database of information that was then marketed to other companies in the scientific community. Only after changing the way they presented results to customers was 23andMe allowed to resume sales.

Medical advances in the last century have brought a host of new information about how our bodies work and respond to treatments. The result has been a proliferation of treatments and cures. Heart rate quickening? There's a pill for that. Need to lose weight? There's a surgery for that. In the process, we have come to a point where we are afflicted with a new, overarching disease: our need to feel in complete control of our health—and, more broadly speaking—our lives.

Chosed's class, however, reminds us that grasping for ultimate control is, at this point, still a futile effort. To be sure, we are much more informed patients than we were 25 or even five years ago, but there is still much more to be discovered. In the meantime, we should remain contemplative and engaged, not only about the current state of our health, but also about how we approach our lives.

"Science is moving very fast, and medicine just has to catch up at this point," she says. "It's my hope that my students leave this class with a basic understanding of genetics, and refer back to this knowledge should certain medical situations arise. More importantly, I want them to be knowledgeable medical consumers who feel confident in questioning and pushing for the truth." It's in the questioning where that truth emerges. ●



NOW

Reflection on the Importance of Furman as It Is Now

In a world that is concerned about achievement and recognition, Furman does more than hold its own. If one takes the time to read about our alumni and faculty, their accomplishments can be discovered far and wide. On an almost daily basis, current students are presented with opportunities that shape the kind of leaders the world is looking for. Greek life, for example, has given me lifelong friends; the Business Block course the confidence that I can succeed; and Furman's culture has rekindled in me a drive for excellence.

When I got into college, that was an achievement, but at Furman, it's not a laurel to rest upon. Just skating by is not what we strive for here. Very rarely have I come across someone who isn't driven to succeed or make a difference. The more I talk to and interact with these people, the more I feel my own drive reappear. This may seem uniform across college campuses, but I would argue it's not. So many college students are focused on doing just enough to graduate.

"Work ethic" is a major part of the Furman DNA. You don't survive or succeed here if you fail to adopt or incorporate this. Of course there is an emphasis on academic success, but what Furman does is emphasize the bigger picture, forcing students to pick our heads up from the narrow tunnel we often build.

Cross-disciplinary studies, CLPs, activities that help us to do a better job of not becoming pure bookworms—I can almost guarantee that if I was at Southern Cal or Baylor (my other choices),

my course load would not include classes on Islamic Studies or Arthur Conan Doyle. Nor would I have attended lectures on the impacts of drone warfare or a critical analysis of the Affordable Care Act. Fulfilling those requirements demands a work ethic, time management, general curiosity, and characteristics that drive the success of leaders.

When I was asked to contribute to this series, I first thought about ideas related to improvement—concerning Furman's reputation, Furman's athletics, Furman's overall appeal. But the more I thought, the more I realized improvement isn't my main concern.

Rather, I don't want our efforts to meet the benchmarks of "prestige" to mean we forget the real opportunities here. Because, while a Furman education is tremendous, what really sets us up for success is the experience we undergo here as a whole. We can so easily overlook that in the face of desiring recognition and awareness.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Samuel Cubeiro '16, born and raised in California, traveled across the country in hope of escaping the bubble he had grown accustomed to. A business and political science double major, he will leave Furman with invaluable experiences that have charted a course much different than what he imagined when he arrived. He plans to apply his education toward a career with a Major League Baseball organization.